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Viewing cable 06MANAGUA2531, SIT REP 6 - NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA2531**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA2531	2006-11-17 00:08	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8224
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MANAGUA 002531

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: SIT REP 6 - NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS

REF: MANAGUA 2517

Classified By: Ambassador P. Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) has released final results for the presidential and provisional results for the congressional elections amidst complaints from the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN), Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) and some observer groups that these tallies were manipulated. According to the CSE, Ortega won with a 9.7 point lead over Montealegre, followed closely by Rizo, while Jarquin lagged behind and Pastora garnered less than half a percent. In the National Assembly deputy race, the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) beat out the ALN by three more seats. (However, the ALN bancada should be reinforced with two additional seats -- one for Eduardo Montealegre as the second in the presidential vote and one for Bolanos as the former president.) The National Democratic Institute (NDI)/Etica y Transperancia (ET) numbers closely match the CSE's results, although international observers still cite a number of anomalies and some apparent fraud. The Carter Center detected "crude, not fancy fraud" during their observation that may have affected the congressional results, and served to disenfranchise voters. The European Union cites structural weaknesses and a lack of transparency in the electoral process, while ALN representatives showed emboffs numerous irregularities in the actas (voting documentation that tallies the results). All appeals to the vote result challenges (impugnaciones) must be filed by Friday, November 17 and then the CSE will publish "final" provisional results on November 19. END SUMMARY.

CSE RESULTS

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12. (SBU) The CSE released final results to the media, which were published in the local newspapers the morning of November 15. Results for the presidential and congressional elections are as follows:

President/Vice President

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FSLN:	38.00% (down from the previous report's 38.07%)
ALN:	28.30% (down from 29.00%)
PLC:	27.11% (up from 26.21%)
MRS:	6.30% (down from 6.44%)
AC:	0.29% (up from 0.27%)

National Assembly (Departmental and National Deputies)

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FSLN:	38
ALN:	22

PLC: 25
MRS: 5
AC: 0

13. (C) According to CSE Chief of Staff Rodrigo Barreto, only 16 impugnaciones were not resolved at the departmental or regional level and hence sent to the CSE for review. None should affect the allocation of National Assembly seats. Barreto clarified to emboff that parties must present the original acts, signed by their fiscales, to file an appeal; they cannot submit copies obtained from the CSE or other sources. Barreto believes that the "real fight" is over money, the reimbursement of campaign funds, which is based on the results of the Presidential race. He claimed that each vote is worth about 95 cordobas and that the regional PLC leaders are clamoring for their piece, aggravating the PLC's internal conflicts.

14. (C) COMMENT: The delay in the CSE's issuance of results has lead contacts to speculate that the FSLN and PLC may have agreed to "horse trading" on results to advantage one or the other in a number of races. For example, the FSLN may have "contributed" some of its votes to the PLC and subtracted others from the ALN so the PLC could win a Masaya seat. Barreto claims that the delay in posting results is due to the fact that many of the faxed results were difficult to read, some of the voting results from rural areas had to be hand-delivered to the CSE, and some JRV presidents purposefully delayed turning in results so that earlier counts would favor their party. END COMMENT

NDI/ET QUICK COUNT RESULTS

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15. (C) NDI and ET released the latest results from their vote count the afternoon of November 15. With 95% of JRVs counted, the ET study shows the following results for deputies in the National Assembly:

FSLN: 37
PLC: 25
ALN: 22
MRS: 6
AC: 0

16. (C) The only discrepancy between the NDI/ET results and the CSE results is one more deputy slot for the MRS and one less for the FSLN, either in the national list or in Managua. ET's data is enough to call results in the following departments: Nueva Segovia, Madriz, Esteli, Leon, Masaya, Carazo, Rivas, Chontales, Boaco, Granada, Rio San Juan. All of these results match with the results posted by the CSE. Their analysis of the impugnaciones reveals that the ultimate decision on unresolved impugnaciones would not affect the results in any of these departments; however, ET and IPADE were not allowed to attend the meeting on the party appeals of impugnaciones. ET still cannot call results in Managua, Chinandega, RAAN, RAAS, Matagalpa, Jinotega, or the national deputy list.

CARTER CENTER CITES "CRUDE, NOT FANCY FRAUD"

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17. (C) According to the Carter Center election observation (EOM) team leader Jaime Aparicio, Senior Director for the Americas Shelley McConnell, and country representative David Dye, the EOM detected "crude, but not fancy fraud" -- especially in the departments of Matagalpa, Boaco, Masaya, and Carazo. McConnell informed Ambassador, DCM, and polcouns on November 15 that the efforts to manipulate the vote tallies occurred at the departmental and municipal levels, while she has seen no evidence thus far that the CSE in Managua was involved in these manipulations. However, when party poll watchers (fiscales) challenged CSE tallies, the

CSE was responsive and rectified the errors, some of which she believes could have been prevented if the fiscales had been more vigilant. The EOM team also acknowledged that many Nicaraguans were disenfranchised because they did not possess the documentation required to vote; however, the Center is uncertain how many people were actually affected given that the CSE has not shared comprehensive data. Further, the CSE's week-long delay in releasing the last 8% of the vote count was "irregular" and has accorded parties only 2 days to contest results.

¶18. (C) McConnell also criticized the opaqueness of the CSE's deliberation of vote result challenges (impugnaciones) because no observers are allowed to monitor it. She was impressed by the ALN's vote tabulation operation, remarking that the ALN intends to challenge three of the Assembly seats. (NOTE: We have heard that it may challenge five seats.) According to McConnell, the Carter report on the elections will note the irregularities and suggest remedies, possibly recommending that the CSE conduct an audit of the vote tally acts. She also lamented that there is no penalty/sanction for attempting fraud (although in fact it appears there is such a provision in Nicaraguan electoral law.)

¶19. (C) The Ambassador congratulated the EOM for its efforts and willingness to call attention to irregularities (Aparicio made the front-page of today's La Prensa with the headline "Carter Center Alert" international organization notes manipulation of the electoral results in some departments). He encouraged Carter Center to continue working in Nicaragua, specifically to help advance electoral reform and national registry reform/ID issuance, and to bolster civil society involvement in these issues. (COMMENT: The Carter Center's public comments on tabulation irregularities in some departments has left open the door for parties not represented in the CSE to challenge vote tallies. However, with only two days to contest the results, time is not on their side. END COMMENT.)

¶10. (C) Responding to McConnell's query regarding what position the USG will take vis-a-vis an Ortega government, the Ambassador referred to Washington statements thus far, noting that certain legislative requirements are tied to much of our assistance and the new GON's compliance, or lack thereof, with these conditions will be a determining factor

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as will the new government's foreign policy. In the short term, implementing the Judicial Career Law would be an encouraging step, suggested the Ambassador. The National Assembly Board of Director's decision to postpone the selection of Supreme Court justices and public prosecutors until the next Assembly convenes is another positive signal. McConnell also mentioned that Carter had offered to co-host with UNDP a meeting between Ortega and Nicaraguan business leaders to discuss common issues.

EUROPEAN UNION: LACK OF TRANSPARENCY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS
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¶11. (C) According to the European Union's deputy head of the election observation mission, Domenico Tuccinard, the EU mission noticed structural weaknesses and a lack of transparency in the electoral system during their observation. The EU fielded 147 observers country-wide. Tuccinard told poloffs on November 15 that although there were cases of attempted fraud (such as the MRS seat in Carazo), the safeguards built into the system seemed to work in most instances. Tuccinard also clarified that Rivas and Lang told the EU team that the status of the "segunda fuerza" (which gives the party that places second the right to name 50% of electoral officials in the system) is determined by the presidential vote (i.e., the ALN is the "segunda fuerza"). The EU also reported that the PLC is losing a seat

to the FSLN in the RAAN by only 20 votes. (However, according to CSE's Barreto, the real difference is about 300 votes, not 20. Barreto also claims that the PLC fiscales failed to impugn questionable JRVs and also failed to file an appeal of the results at the regional level and now it is too late.) Some members of the EU mission will remain in Nicaragua for another two weeks, but most will leave by the end of this week.

ALN: THE NUMBERS DON'T ADD UP
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¶12. (C) The ALN has noted numerous irregularities in the actas during their revision. Kitty Monterey (in charge of the vote count) and Carlos Garcia (the ALN's national fiscal) told poloffs on November 15 that more than 50% of the JRVs report different numbers of ballots counted for the different vote categories (presidential, national, departmental, Parlacen), even though after accounting for valid and null votes, they should all be the same. The ALN has scrutinized most of the actas (they are only missing 51 -- less than 0.5% of the total) Through this review, they have noted substantive irregularities (affecting the allocation of seats) in Managua, Masaya, Chinandega, Boaco, Leon, and the national list.

¶13. (C) The ALN also observed that many of the actas were incorrectly filled out and/or missing bar codes and other required information. Often, the departmental sums on the actas contain adding "mistakes" and show different numbers from the CSE published results (the Masaya results were off by thousands, advantaging the PLC and disadvantaging the ALN and FSLN). Monterey and Garcia reported that 61,441 ballots were nullified countrywide, a total they believe is higher than normal. They also emphasized that the CSE claimed they would provide a digital report of the vote totals to the parties, but had not yet complied, complicating the parties' ability to compare results efficiently.

MRS: FRAUD DISADVANTAGED THE ALN
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¶14. (C) MRS spokesman Israel Lewites believes there was fraud and a systematic intention to rob votes, pointing to Carazo as a case that affected the MRS. Lewites acknowledged that views are split within the MRS, but he believes the systematic fraud was not perpetrated on a grand scale, rather, "a few votes here and a few votes there." He also opined that the fraud disadvantaged the ALN much more than the MRS. (COMMENT: We will meet with MRS President Dora Maria Tellez to follow-up on the issue. END COMMENT)

COMMENT
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¶15. With only a two-day window accorded parties intending to contest the results, affected parties must chose their "battles" judiciously. The media has picked up on the vote tally inconsistencies reflected in disparities between

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official JRV vote summaries, departmental calculations, and the CSE's official preliminary results - specifically citing the Masaya case.
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